



Rick Bishop, River Keeper

Executive Director, Friends of Bass River/ Father/Husband/Sailboat (Hard Water) Racer and Initiator of Hyannis InterClub Frostbite Fleet. 11year member Town of Yarmouth Conservation Commission.

What do you/did you do for a living?

I have been the Executive Director of Friends of Bass River since **January 6, 2020**. In this role, I created and direct the upper Bass River Headwaters Restoration project, oversee seven volunteer water testing teams, identify areas of need along the river and liaise with town, state, and federal agencies. (among the many hats I wear).

I was previously the Sales Manager for Bayside Expo Center in South Boston, and Operations Manager of the Volvo Around the World Sailboat race, where I built out and managed operation of the on-shore race village. Exciting times as Boston welcomed 315,000 visitors over a two-week period.

I initially identified the Upper Bass River Restoration project after seeing the Tidmarsh project in Plymouth, where retired cranberry bogs were returned to their natural wetlands state. I felt certain this same kind of work could help clean the upper part of the Bass River as the restored wetlands are natural nitrogen and carbon sinks. The key problem for Bass River is high levels of Nitrogen in the water. Nitrogen (fertilizer) promotes algal growth that blocks sunlight and inhibits growth of healthy plants. Studies have found Mill Pond at the upper end of the river requires a 73% reduction in Nitrogen and the remainder of Bass River a 46% reduction. This is no small challenge as private septic systems are the main source of nitrogen.

My first step was to secure a \$260,000. Southern New England Estuaries grant to help to design the project. The project includes replacement of undersized culverts, removal of sand, ditch filling, native plantings and trail enhancement. This will allow improved water quality, improved aquatic and terrestrial habitat, replace aging road infrastructure (including a 200-year-old culvert along Weir Road) and maintain and enhance recreational opportunities. In the early 1800s the second largest herring catch in Massachusetts was at Hamblins Brook near the Head of the Bass River. Today there are zero. In working with three other groups, we look to bring 57.2 acres of retired cranberry bogs back to native wetlands by 2025.



How long have you been on the river?

My parents and cousin pushed me in a carriage down Willow Street in Yarmouth where it meets Windmill Beach on the Bass River. It is where I spent the first fourteen years of my life and learned to swim.

Favorite memory on the river

Back in the day my family and I would water ski every Saturday and Sunday along the old speed zone at the intersection of the Bass River and Weir Creek. We had a Boston Whaler which was the 13th Whaler the company had built! My dad would drive me down to the edge of the river in our Willys Jeep. My second favorite memory is with my longest and dearest friend Michael. He and I would start at the mouth of the river, one of us in the boat and one of us on the skis and go all the way up to Follins Pond, which is about 7 miles. And then we would switch and return back down to the mouth. And a third favorite memory and may be my claim to fame is that I have jumped off every bridge on the river from the Route 6 and railroad bridge, to the High Bank Bridge and Bass River/Route 28 Bridge. I took my wife to jump off the railroad bridge for our 2nd or 3rd date. My first date was on her Pearson 30 ft sailboat. I have always loved sailing though these days my favorite is Hard Water or Ice sailing and I enjoy competing. I just recently returned from competing in the DN iceboat world championship in Madison Wisconsin.

Indispensable item you have when you are on/in the river

Bathing suit (when the water is warm enough!)

Favorite place on the river

Follins pond and the Indian Lands narrows

**Last book you read**

The Outermost House by Henry Beston, is a book I keep by my bed and always read a page or two each night. I have started Permission to Dream by Chris Gardner and Mimi Eichler Rivas.

How has life along the river changed

I am not sure I can describe how much it has changed. The antique half Cape's are long gone, boat traffic on a warm sunny day is not what I ever imagined. There are so many more boats and personal watercraft using the river. I love Follins Pond and the tranquility of that area.

What must we be mindful of/what keeps you up at night

Plastic is a big problem. The blue flotation from floating docks ends up all over the river. Little pieces of foam are consumed by birds and result in them being sick or passing away. We need to mandate enclosed foam floatation, for all docks.



Second, is boat owners who disregard the importance of carefully removing waste from holding tanks.

I see how far Bass River has degraded in my lifetime. I remember scalloping with my Dad in the 1980s in the Georgetown Flats area (a bit north of the entrance to Bass River Marina) and in no time we would get our limit. I remember fishing on the granite blocks at the railroad bridge and catching 20-30 "Schoolie" Striped Bass a night.

Follins Pond used to be 100% eel grass with crabs, eel and many fish. Now it is dominated by invasive steel wool (like) growth and little fish.

Thankfully both Yarmouth and Dennis are working towards waste water treatment which will go a long way towards improving water quality. Hopefully resulting in scalloping and fishing as we once enjoyed.



Rick is an avid ice boater - here he is racing in Minnesota this winter.

Thank you to Carol Yamartino for putting these interviews together. If you would like to be interviewed for our Meet the River segments please contact us at friends@friendsofbassriver.org

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